Congressman Pence **was interviewed by Jeffrey Brown** for a segment on *PBS*' "NewsHour" discussing health care reform:

Transcript:

JEFFREY BROWN: And to the view of a leading House Republican, Mike Pence of Indiana. He's the chair of the House Republican Conference.

Welcome to you, Congressman Pence.

REP. MIKE PENCE, R-Ind.: Thank you, Jeff.

JEFFREY BROWN: I would like start where Jim started with Rahm Emanuel. How seriously do you take the threats against members over this vote? And what, if anything, can or should be done?

REP. MIKE PENCE: Well, let me say that there's no excuse. Regardless of how strongly people feel in opposition to this health care legislation, there's no excuse for bigotry or threats or -- or acts of violence. We condemn them in the strongest possible terms.

The people who engage in that behavior are undermining any cause that they purport to believe in. And they should be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. I mean, this is part of what goes with being in public life. I have -- I have received threats and had to make referrals to Capitol Hill Police and to the FBI in the past.

But I'm pleased to see leadership in both political parties condemning threats, vandalism, and -- and acts of violence against Democrats and Republicans' offices.

JEFFREY BROWN: But what do you see going on out there in the country? Is the rancor, the anger, the divisiveness in some danger of spinning out of control?

REP. MIKE PENCE: Well, you know, I -- I -- I don't believe it is.

Look, the American people don't support a government takeover of health care. They don't support this bill. The president probably should have taken Rahm's advice and tried a more incremental approach, rather than ramming through, with backroom deals, this -- this massive expansion of government into one-sixth of our economy.

I think there are millions of Americans that are angry about what's happened. And on the -- on the far fringes of that frustration, you have people that are expressing themselves in improper ways, and -- and you have one or two people, apparently, who have taken improper, if not illegal, actions.

But I -- I want to be very careful here about defending the rights of law-abiding citizens to exercise their rights under the First Amendment of freedom of speech and the freedom to peaceably assemble.

JEFFREY BROWN: You just heard Rahm Emanuel, though, talk about aspects of this bill that prominent Republicans in the past have advocated, that it still relies, in essence, on the private health insurance market, in spite of the way you just characterized it.

REP. MIKE PENCE: Well, I think that's a complete mischaracterization of this legislation.

What we have here is a mandate that every American purchase health insurance, whether they want it or need it or not, $569 billion in job-killing tax increases during the worst recession in 25

years. And then we have the creation of a massive government-run insurance exchange which will dictate what health insurance companies can offer and, ultimately, very likely, you know, what the rate structures and -- and benefits will be.

This -- this has very little to do with the free market. You know, I heard Rahm referring to letting people purchase across state lines. Well, you know, there were bills on Capitol Hill to allow Americans to purchase health insurance across state lines, like we buy life insurance, like we buy car insurance.

This massive government-run insurance exchange is not that. It's not a free market system. It's a government-run system. And I think -- I think that's why it's being rejected by decisive majorities of Americans, even at this hour.

JEFFREY BROWN: Well -- well, there are polls still a majority against it, but there are some polls that suggest that, even in recent days, since it -- since it passed, some swing in support of it.

REP. MIKE PENCE: Well, I -- you know, I expect that -- I expect that that's the case, I mean, that, you know, there will be Americans who see one or two small items in the bill that sound attractive to them.

But I think, as the -- as the country continues to digest this legislation, the enormous tax increases that are contemplated here, the idea -- again, I go back to mandating that every American purchase government-approved health insurance, whether they want it or need it or not, and creating incentives for businesses to cancel the health insurance they have and send people to a government-run insurance exchange, I think, the more the American people look at this, the more they're going to know, what we ought to do is repeal Obamacare and immediately start over with the kind of reforms that will be built on -- on individual choice, and not more government.

JEFFREY BROWN: Well, will there now be a major repeal effort? Mr. Boehner said it earlier in that clip we saw. But, on the show earlier this week, Senator Jon Kyl, he said, while he would like a repeal, he said he didn't see it quite in the cards because the votes aren't there, and he suggested it might be a waste of time.

What -- what -- what do you see going forward? Will there be a major effort?

REP. MIKE PENCE: Well, I -- I believe there's already a major effort under way across this country.

I saw a survey that said some 55 percent of Americans want to -- want to repeal this bill and start over. And I think that's where the American people are at. They know we can do better. And House Republicans are going to be taking our case for repeal and starting over to the nation.

We obviously have to retire this majority on the first Tuesday in November, and, after that, immediately go to work on preventing this massive government takeover of health care from being put into effect, and -- and ultimately achieve the goal of repealing it and replacing it with the kind of reforms that will give Americans more choices, instead of more government in health care.

JEFFREY BROWN: What about the question that Jim asked Rahm Emanuel, the "What next?? question. Are there some policy initiatives going forward where you could see Republicans working with Democrats?

REP. MIKE PENCE: Well, you better believe it.

You know, I talked to Senator Ron Wyden about his bill that would allow Americans to purchase health insurance across state lines. He was pretty much shut out of bringing that bill in the Senate.

But whether it's that, whether it's efforts to cover Americans with preexisting conditions, you know, there was a lot of room here for an incremental, step-by-step approach that would have been fiscally responsible and could have represented bipartisan consensus.

What we got, instead, was a massive expansion of the federal government's role in our health care economy rammed through the House and Senate with sordid backroom deals. I think the process and the policy has really turned off millions of Americans. And that's why we're going to focus on giving them a better choice.

It's going to have to take an election to put us in a position to do that. But we're going to campaign on repealing and starting over with the kind of health care reform that will square with the common sense and the common values of the American people.

JEFFREY BROWN: Well, does that kind of language you're using now, is that what we can expect to hear, taking it to people and making it part of the next -- the next campaign to make this the issue?

And, if so, you heard the president in our earlier clip saying, if that's what you want, bring it on, essentially.

REP. MIKE PENCE: No, I think George W. Bush said, bring it on.

REP. MIKE PENCE: President Obama has...

JEFFREY BROWN: He said, go for it. You're right.

REP. MIKE PENCE: He said -- he said, go for it. It must be presidential prerogative to be provocative, which is fine.

Look, the American people are going to go for it. They don't want this government takeover of health care. And I -- I think you're going to -- you're going to see a concerted effort across this country to say no, not -- not just to a massive expansion of the federal government's role in

health care, but, frankly, of this -- of this long business of borrowing and spending and bailouts and takeovers that have happened under Republican and Democrat administrations.

I mean, you know, the -- the last administration doubled the national debt, passed a massive Wall Street bailout, set into motion a bailout and takeover of the domestic automotive industry. Democrats in Congress and this administration have put runaway federal spending on steroids and launched this government takeover of health care.

I think the American people have had it. They know this country is headed toward bankruptcy. And those issues, I believe, in totality, will be exactly what are -- what drive this election year. And -- and I think -- I think Republicans are going to offer a bright-line choice, with the borrowing, the spending, the bailouts, and the takeovers of the recent past.

JEFFREY BROWN: All right, Congressman Mike Pence of Indiana, thank you for joining us.

REP. MIKE PENCE: Thank you.